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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

January 25, 2004

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 255 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV
Captions: None
Subject: UAE FEDERAL NATIONAL COUNCIL SPEAKER ON IRAQ, ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS, VISIT TO U.S.
Ref: None

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 00255

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CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: RSO AMB P/M ECON DCM

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA
DRAFTED: POL:JFMAYBURY
CLEARED: DCM:RAALBRIGHT PAO:HOLSIN-WINDECKER CG:JDAVIS

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INFO RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 000255

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STATE FOR NEA/NGA, NEA/PI, NEA/PPD, NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/14
TAGS: PREL PGOV KWMN KMPI IZ TC
SUBJECT: UAE FEDERAL NATIONAL COUNCIL SPEAKER ON IRAQ, ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS, VISIT TO U.S.

Ref: Abu Dhabi 211

(U) Classified by Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with Federal National Council Speaker Saeed Mohammed Saeed Al Kindi on January 21 and discussed Iraq, the future role of women in UAE political life, and the possibility of sending a delegation of Emirati parliamentarians and FNC staff to the United States to observe how American political institutions function. On Iraq, Al Kindi warned of fragmentation on ethnic and religious lines and expressed support for giving the United Nations a greater political

role in Iraq's political transition. Al Kindi stated that there were no barriers to women being appointed to the FNC, and that it was up to the rulers of each of the seven emirates to make such appointments. He welcomed the opportunity for parliamentarians to visit the United States and appointed the FNC Secretary General to work out the details with the

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Embassy. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador called on FNC Speaker Al Kindi on January 21. Also present at the meeting were FNC Secretary General Mohammed Salem Al Mazrouie, and

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Abdul Rahman Al Shamsi, Assistant Secretary General for Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs. Polchief accompanied the Ambassador.

¶3. (C) On Iraq, Al Kindi was insistent that the country's future government not be based on ethnic or religious composition. Iraqis, he added, need to work for the future of their nation, not for individual group interests. This view tracks with the views of other senior UAE leaders (see reftel). Al Kindi said everyone in the Gulf region should play a role in helping Iraq through this transition period. Iraqis have been destroyed by 35 years of rule by Saddam Hussein, he said. If left to their own devices, the Iraqis would split up into religious or ethnic groups, a detrimental development the UAE would not want to see.

¶4. (U) Concerning the future political role of women in the UAE, Al Kindi said that there is nothing in UAE law that opposes this. He said it is up to the rulers of each emirate to make appointments. (Note: Shaykha Fatima, the wife of UAE President Shaykh Zayed, has called for the admission of women into the FNC. End note.) The FNC has 40 members drawn from the emirates on the basis of their population, with eight each from Abu Dhabi and Dubai, six each for Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah, and four each for Fujairah, Umm Al-Qaiwain and Ajman. Al Kindi said that Emirati women work in many companies and government ministries, and noted that a number of women had been appointed recently to the Sharjah Consultative Council. Women occupy more than half the positions in the FNC general secretariat. Al Kindi told the Ambassador that he believes the role of women in the economy, society, and employment will expand in the near future.

¶5. (U) The Ambassador and Al Kindi reviewed U.S.-UAE bilateral relations in many fields, including commerce, the military, and law enforcement. The Ambassador also assured Al Kindi that the USG was taking steps to reverse the trend toward declining UAE student enrollments in American colleges by conducting outreach programs on new visa procedures. The Ambassador said that the Embassy wanted to propose a visit to the United States by UAE parliamentarians and their staff to learn about how the American legislative system functions. Al Kindi was very receptive to the idea, which our mission had discussed previously with FNC member and former International Visitor recipient Ali Jassem. Ali Jassem heads the radio station in Umm Al Qaiwain emirate. Post is inquiring with the Department about funding options, including MEPI and the International Visitor program.

¶6. (U) Al Kindi explained that a principal goal of the FNC is to look after the country's economic and business interests. These are the important issues that move a nation forward and keep it on the right track, he said. The reason the UAE has opened its

doors to people of many nationalities and treated them very well is because it recognizes their valuable contribution to the economy, he said. The FNC has a legislative role under the constitution and is responsible for examining and, if necessary, amending, proposed federal legislation. The FNC has the power to summon and to question any federal minister, as it did recently when it grilled Shaykh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the minister of higher education and scientific research, over the education system's failure to produce qualified graduates to fill jobs on the local economy.

¶7. (U) Biographical notes: Saeed Mohammed Saeed Al Kindi was elected by his FNC peers as Speaker of the Federal National Council on February 18, 2003. He was appointed to the FNC in February 1993. A Dubai businessman, Al Kindi is chairman of the Al Ghandi (variation on the spelling of his name) group of companies, which includes National Auto (GMC), Al Ghandi Auto (Fiat and Lancia), Al Ghandi General Trading (Philips), and various contracting, freight, real estate and construction companies. He is currently Deputy Chairman of the Board for the Dubai Commercial Bank, a board member of the Zayed Program for Housing, and a member of the Dubai Economic Council. He serves on a committee responsible for resolving rental disputes between landlords and tenants in Dubai. He was born on June 15, 1943.

WAHBA